

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6379
INFO AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 03874

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PO, GW
SUBJECT: FRG-POLISH DIFFERENCES OVER PLACE NAMES IN
PASSPORTS

1. A NEW IRRITANT HAS ARISEN IN FRG-POLISH RELATIONS.
TO THE GERMANS' CHAGRIN, THE POLES HAVE UNILATERALLY
DISCARDED VERBAL UNDERSTANDINGS ON THE LANGUAGE TO BE
USED FOR PLACE NAMES IN PASSPORTS OF GERMANS BORN IN
FORMERLY GERMAN TERRITORIES NOW PART OF POLAND.
HERETOFORE, THE POLES HAD ACCEPTED FOR VISA
APPLICATIONS/PASSPORTS IN WHICH GERMAN NAMES WERE
USED FOR FORMER GERMAN CITIES.
THEY ARE NOW REJECTING SUCH PASSPORTS
AND INSISTING THAT THE PLACE NAMES BE IN POLISH.

2. THE GERMANS MAINTAIN THAT A VERBAL UNDERSTANDING
ON THE USE OF GERMAN PLACE NAMES FOR FORMER GERMAN
CITIES WAS REACHED IN 1970 AND RECONFIRMED DURING THE
1976 GIEREK VISIT HERE. WARSAW, HOWEVER, CLAIMS THAT
NO SUCH AGREEMENT EXISTS. THE POLES, HAVING MADE NO
REFERENCE TO THE MATTER DURING THE CHANCELLOR'S
DECEMBER VISIT, BEGAN REJECTING GERMAN PASSPORTS WITH
GERMAN PLACE NAMES JUST PRIOR TO CHRISTMAS. AS A
RESULT, SEVERAL SCORE GERMANS HAVE BEEN DENIED VISAS.
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THE FOREIGN OFFICE BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT THIS IS ONLY
THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG. THEY NOTE THAT CONSIDERABLY
MORE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN AFFECTED, BUT THAT IN MOST CASES,
THE GERMAN CITIZENS CONCERNED HAVE PREVAILED UPON THE
LOCAL GERMAN PASSPORT OFFICE TO CROSS OUT THE GERMAN
PLACE NAME AND SUBSTITUTE THE POLISH EQUIVALENT. WHILE
THIS ENABLES THE PASSPORT HOLDER TO RECEIVE HIS POLISH

VISA, IT IS LOOKED UPON ASKANCE BY THE FOREIGN OFFICE AND THE CHANCELLERY. OFFICIALS HERE ARE OF THE VIEW THAT THERE ARE VALID HISTORIC REASONS FOR CONTINUING THE AGREED-UPON PROCEDURE.

3. FOREIGN OFFICE STATE SECRETARY VAN WELL HAS TWICE CALLED IN POLISH AMBASSADOR PIATKOWSKI TO PROTEST THE UNILATERAL CHANGE. PIATKOWSKI HAS BLITHELY DENIED THE EXISTENCE OF ANY FRG-POLISH UNDERSTANDING AND HAS NOT GIVEN THE GERMANS ANY SATISFACTION ON THIS SCORE. THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR IN WARSAW HAS ALSO PROTESTED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WITHOUT SUCCESS. SOME FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS BELIEVE THE ONLY HOPE FOR RESOLUTION OF THE MATTER LIES IN GENSCHER RAISING IT DURING HIS FORTHCOMING, BUT AS YET UNSCHEDULED, VISIT TO POLAND. IN THE MEANTIME, OUR SOURCES TELL US THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN WARSAW HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO BEGIN A "SLOWDOWN" IN ITS VISA ISSUANCE TO POLISH APPLICANTS. MEEHAN

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